

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS  
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**Dell Rapids School District  
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2001-2002**

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**Dates of On Site Visit:** December 9, 2002

**Date of Report:** December 16, 2002

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This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Office of Special Education. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

<b>Promising Practice</b>	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
<b>Meets Requirements</b>	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
<b>Needs Improvement</b>	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
<b>Out of Compliance</b>	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
<b>Not applicable</b>	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

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<b>Principle 1 – General Supervision</b>
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

**Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Table A
- B – District/Agency instructional staff information
- C – Suspension and expulsion information

- D – Statewide assessment information
- E – Enrollment information
- F – Placement alternatives
- G – Disabling conditions
- H – Exiting information
- Parent survey
- Referrals
- Publications of child find notices
- Comprehensive plan
- Yearly child find results
- IEPs
- Prairie Lakes Ed. Cooperative handbook
- Reviews
- Child Count data
- Budget
- SIMS
- Board policies
- Area training/TTL
- Workshops and inservices

### **Promising practice**

The steering committee identified the following as promising practices: The school has a general education team called STARR in effect for referrals at the elementary level;

The local private school was invited and did attend the STARR program training; and

All paraprofessionals receive pre-inservice training from the director of the Prairie Lakes Educational Cooperative aligned with state suggested training areas.

### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee identified the following as activities which meet minimum requirements:

The district has identified systems for receiving documented referrals;

The district has surveyed groups involved in the child find activities and reviewed files;

The district follows state policies and procedures regarding the placement and services of students who are voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools;

The district has evidence of appropriate policies and procedures for students placed by the school district in private schools;

The district uses the relevant school data to analyze and review their progress toward the state performance goals and indicators;

The district reports all students who have been suspended, expelled, or dropped out as per state regulations; and

The district employs and contracts personnel who are fully licensed or certified to work with students with special needs.

### **Needs improvement**

Pre-referral team meetings are needed to address students who need assistance at the middle school and high school levels.

Surveys indicate more training is needed to address participation of student with disabilities in general education, particularly modification and accommodations.

Surveys also indicated the staff needs more time to collaborate with each other for children with disabilities.

### **Out of compliance**

Four student files did not meet the requirement of an active IEP.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Promising practice**

The review team found the STARR team to be a promising practice at the elementary level. This team consists of elementary teachers who have been trained by the Masons for three days to help implement strategies for students at risk. These are pre-referral strategies to help students succeed before a referral is initiated.

The review team found the Character Counts Program to be a promising practice for students at the elementary and middle school level. All students are assigned to a district staff person at each building level. The student groups remain with their assigned staff person during the school year. Elementary groups meet once a month, middle school students once a week. Areas of discussion center on the 6 pillars of character education.

The review team found the Peer Helper training at the high school to be a promising practice. Fifteen new peer helpers are trained each year to help students at the high school level with areas in which they are having difficulty.

#### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas of meet requirements as concluded by the steering committee.

#### **Needs improvement**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas of need improvement for general supervision as concluded by the steering committee.

### **Out of compliance**

Issues requiring immediate attention

24:05:17:03. Annual report of children served.

The monitoring team validated that 4 students, who were reported on the child count for December 2001, did not have an active IEP at that time.

## **Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education**

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- State tables B,C,E,F,K,L,M,N,
- Number of students screened
- Preschool age children
- School age children
- Budget information
- Surveys
- Personnel development
- Number of referrals not resulting in evaluations
- Personnel training
- Comprehensive plan

### **Meets requirements**

Current practices and past reviews from the state and federal special education monitoring demonstrates the school district provides a FAPE for all children with disabilities. All information is available to the monitoring team to review for assurances of this statement.

### **Validation Results**

### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with the areas of maintenance for Free and Appropriate Public Education as concluded by the steering committee.

## **Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation**

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- State tables G, H, I, J,
- TAT information

- Teacher file reviews
- Initial referral
- Surveys
- Parent and teacher report forms
- Comprehensive plan
- IEPs
- Permission to evaluate forms
- SIMS
- Progress reports
- Report cards
- Psychologists reports

### **Meets requirements**

The district is complying in this area with the exception of functional based assessments.

The district utilizes complete, valid, and reliable evaluations for to determine eligibility of students.

The district is following the appropriate procedures for written consent before assessments are administered.

All evaluation instruments meet the minimum requirements for evaluation by the state.

The district provides documentation of eligibility determination to the parent.

The district insures reevaluations are conducted in accordance with all procedural requirements.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas of meet requirements for Appropriate Evaluation as concluded by the steering committee.

#### **Needs improvement**

The monitoring team found inconsistent dates being used by the IEP team for the multi-disciplinary evaluation. Dates being used are the last evaluation date and the date the report was received by the school. This caused a timeline problem for one student reviewed.

#### **Out of compliance**

##### **24:05:04 Evaluation procedures**

Through file reviews and interviews with special education instructors the monitoring team found the high school and middle school instructors to be unfamiliar with the functional assessment requirement. Twelve files showed the staff did not include functional information in the evaluation process. They did not seem to understand that this information was to be used for determining specific skills areas affected by the student's disability, the student's present levels of academic performance, their progress in the general curriculum of development of annual goals and short term instructional objectives. Functional assessment information is available through a variety of sources in the district, however, there is not an established process for collecting, analyzing, summarizing or integrating the information into the 25 day evaluation process or the student's IEP.

Transition assessments were not completed for four eligible students. There were no types of assessments that would assist with determining the student's interest area, interest inventory, independent living checklists, etceteras.

## **Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards**

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- State table L and M
- Teacher file reviews
- Surveys
- Comprehensive plan
- Parental right document
- Consent and prior notice forms
- Public awareness information
- FERPA disclosure
- Training
- State surrogate document
- SPED handbook
- Web pages

### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee concluded that:

The district ensures notification to parents of their rights;

The district has used surrogate parents according to the state procedures;

The district provides information to all parents pertaining to consent for evaluation and clearly explain the process;

The district provides all parents their rights to inspect their child's files and to have copies made free of charge; and

The district has policies/procedures in place to address complaint issues and due process hearings should they arise.

### **Validation Results**

### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas of meet requirements for procedural safeguards as concluded by the steering committee.

## **Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program**

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- File reviews
- Student progress data
- Personnel training
- Budget information
- State K and N (data tables)
- Surveys
- Report form
- Progress data sheets
- Complaints
- IEPs
- SPED handbook

### **Promising practice**

The following was identified as a promising practice by the district:

The prior notice informs parents that they may invite other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding their child, including related services personnel as appropriate.

### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee identified the following areas or activities as meeting requirements:

The district has an appropriate plan in place to develop, review, and revise IEPs;

The school district provides opportunities for teachers to have access to the IEPs;

General education teachers are informed of modifications and accommodations to be used in the classroom;

Written notices are used that meet the IDEA requirements;

All students grades 7-12 are invited to the IEP meetings as well as others according to the discretion of the parents;

Transition services are provided according to state guidelines;

The IEP format used is in compliance with state and federal guidelines; and

Annual goals are measurable and are in compliance to the general education reporting system and IDEA guidelines.

**Needs improvement**

The steering committee concluded that Middle School counselors need to be involved in writing goals and objectives to be included in the IEP as part of related services.

**Out of compliance**

The steering committee identified the following areas as out of compliance:

Superintendent/designee should be at all IEP meetings.

File reviews indicated 4 IEPs were not reviewed on or before the IEP date.

**Validation Results****Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with the areas of meets requirements identified under IEP content as concluded by the steering committee.

**Needs improvement**

The monitoring team agrees the area of need improvement identified under the IEP program as concluded by the steering committee.

**Out of compliance****24:05:27:01.03 Content of individualized education program**

A student's IEP must contain present levels of performance based upon the skill areas affected by the students identified disability. The present levels of performance are based upon the functional assessment information gathered during the comprehensive evaluation process. In 12 files reviewed present levels of performance were not linked to evaluation and were not skill specific. Present levels of performance at the high school and middle school level did not show a carry over process of evaluation, analization, and summarization. Present level statements were vague, for example: low functioning, poor reading and comprehension. Transition was not addressed in present levels of performance on 7 IEPs reviewed.

Beginning at age 14 or younger, the student's program must include a statement of transition service that focuses on the student's course of study such as participation in advanced-placement courses or a vocational education program. In six files reviewed the course of study was not developed for the student through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The required courses were listed, but no electives were listed to develop a program for the student's need.

The IEP must describe individual modifications needed by the student, the anticipated frequency, location and duration of those modifications. In five files reviewed there was not specific information to determine the modifications, for example: "Assignments and tests may be modified. May need to have alternate tests to be decided by the teacher." In three files reviewed the placement for a student had been decided via modifications provided before the least restrictive environment had been addressed. For example: "Will attend the resource room for her reading and language arts curriculum. The resource room staff may orally read test items at \_\_\_ discretion. \_\_\_ may take tests in the resource room."



#### 24:05:27:01.01. Team Membership

The superintendent or designee of a student with a disability, as a member of the individualized education program team, must, to the extent appropriate, participate in the development, review, and revision of the student's individualized education program. In 15 files reviewed the elementary principal or a designee were not in attendance at the IEP meetings.

### **Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment**

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

#### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- State tables E,G, I, J, F, and N
- File reviews
- Survey

#### **Meets requirements**

The school district has policies and procedures in place for addressing the LRE of students. Behavioral Intervention Plans have been written for students who require them.

#### **Needs improvement**

The school district needs to look at inclusion practices for pre-school- The school district has a preschool program for students with disabilities and will research possibilities for alternative settings for inclusion practices.

#### **Validation Results**

#### **Promising practice**

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee's conclusions of meet requirements.

#### **Needs improvement**

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee's conclusions of need improvement.